



Reclaim



PROVOCATEUR

No Accident

IT'S TIME TO
CHANGE THE WAY
WE TALK ABOUT
MOTOR VEHICLE
VIOLENCE.

A FEW YEARS AGO, THE *NEW YORK Times* published a five-sentence brief about a man who “intentionally ran over five people” with an SUV after a fight in North Bellmore, Long Island. The driver, the *Times* reported, “fled the scene of the accident.” The police later located the vehicle that “they believed was involved in the accident.” One of the victims was in critical condition.

Ho hum. News briefs about the previous day’s car crashes are as routine as box scores and the weather forecast. Yet, in this case, the *Times*’ (and, presumably, the Nassau County cops’) choice of one particular word stood out: If a man intentionally ran over five people, how could that possibly be considered an accident? If, instead of car keys, the man had picked up a gun and shot five people, would the press and police have called that an “accident” too? No. They’d have called it “attempted homicide.” Yet, for some reason when the weapon is a car, when the violence on our streets is done with a motor vehicle, it’s always just an “accident.”

Words are powerful. They shape the way we see the world around us. As a recent study by Stanford University cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky shows, small changes in language can have a profound impact on how we conceptual-

ize and act on public policy issues. Boroditsky presented two separate groups with nearly identical paragraphs about rising crime rates in a fictional city. For one group, the story started: “Crime is a beast ravaging the city of Addison.” The other group’s story began: “Crime is a virus ravaging the city of Addison.” For both groups the story continued with an identical set of alarming statistics. After they read the paragraph, Boroditsky asked her subjects what the police should do about Addison’s crime wave.

Participants who read the “beast” story overwhelmingly called for more police enforcement. They wanted criminals to be captured and punished. Participants who read the “virus” story leaned toward social reform. They tended to want police to investigate the root causes of the crime to stop its spread. Changing just a single word, Boroditsky found, “can have a powerful influence over how people attempt to solve social problems like crime and how they gather information to make ‘well-informed’ decisions.” When the study’s 485 participants were asked to highlight what they thought was the most influential part of the text, almost everyone insisted that they had been persuaded by the statistics. The influence of the beast and virus metaphors, Boroditsky concluded, is “covert.”

People often don’t recognize when they are being swayed by a specific choice of words.

So, is it any surprise that the NYPD’s “Accident” Investigation Squad so frequently declares “no criminality suspected” after a motor vehicle is used to kill a pedestrian or cyclist on New York City streets? After all, they don’t call themselves the Motor Vehicle Manslaughter Squad. They don’t think of themselves as homicide detectives, or cars as weapons, or drivers as killers. The word “accident” implies no fault. It’s what we call it when a toddler makes a small mess. “Don’t cry over spilled milk,” we say. The assumption is built into the name of the NYPD bureaucracy itself: Death by motor vehicle is an “accident” before the investigators even get to what may very well be the scene of a crime. The Accident Investigation Squad is there to clean up and keep the traffic moving.

Though it may sometimes seem otherwise, New York City drivers don’t wake up in the morning intending to harm pedestrians and cyclists. Most crashes are unintentional and “accident” is not an inaccurate word to describe them. But the fact remains: Driver negligence is the number one cause of crashes, and it’s no big surprise—or accident—when negligent driving hurts and kills people on crowded city streets. In fact, our legal system has a word for this type of unintentional killing: “Manslaughter.” Lots of work needs to be done and lots of things need to change to fix the way the NYPD deals with pedestrians and cyclists who have been injured and killed by negligent drivers. But if it’s true that small changes in language can have a big impact on public policy, then the easiest change is simply this: Stop calling car crashes “accidents.” ■

AARON NAPARSTEK IS ON TEMPORARY LOAN TO CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, WHERE HE IS A VISITING SCHOLAR AT MIT’S DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING. HE IS THE FOUNDER AND FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF STREETS.BLOG.ORG.



Our mission is to reclaim New York City's streets from the automobile, and to advocate for bicycling, walking and public transit as the best transportation alternatives.

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PUBLISHER: Paul Steely White

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Graham T. Beck

DEPUTY EDITOR: Jessie Singer

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Joseph Ferris

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Eliza Davidson

PROOFREADER: Ken Coughlin

DESIGNER: Sarah Lang

CONTRIBUTORS: Graham T. Beck, Eliza Davidson,
Joseph Ferris, Renée Fidz, Andrew Hinderaker,
Aaron Naparstek, Jessie Singer & Paul Steely White

COVER DESIGN: Sarah Lang

COVER PHOTO: NYC DOT

127 West 26th Street Suite 1002
New York, NY 10001-6808
Tel 212-629-8080, Fax 629-8334
info@transalt.org, transalt.org

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Northern Exposure

I'M NOT MUCH OF A WORRIER, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING UNDERWAY IN Toronto that's keeping me up at night. Their new mayor, Rob Ford, has taken aim at bike lanes and mass transit: "Roads are built for buses, cars and trucks, not for people on bikes," he's said, and he's acting on his impulses, ripping up livable streets improvements as fast as he can.

Normally, I'd shake my head and mutter something about how misguided he is, but New York City has a mayoral election fast approaching, and some of the candidates are saying things that don't sit well.

Sure, Council Speaker Christine Quinn took time to pose with a Citi Bike, and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer promised to make mass transit a centerpiece of his campaign. But Comptroller John Liu loves to stir up trouble when it comes to the economics of livable streets—he recently published a scaremongering report warning that bike share would generate a firestorm of frivolous lawsuits. And the candidate I know best, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, told an audience of Brooklyn donors that bike lanes are often "ill conceived" and pledged to put the brakes on the rollout of safer street designs in favor of a more "incremental" approach.

Yikes! What's worse is that Bill is a good guy, a neighbor of mine and, until recently, a livable streets stalwart. So what happened? When did the tide change? I can't say for sure, and I'm not convinced it truly has, but I do know that there are some well-connected, deep-pocketed people in this city who have an outdated view of our streets—and all the mayoral candidates on speed-dial.

So how can we compete? How can we keep Times Square car-free and Prospect Park West safe? How can we guarantee bike share succeeds and pedestrian plazas continue to pop up in all five boroughs? How can we make sure New York City doesn't suffer the same fate as Toronto?

Simple: Say something. Speak up. Write a letter. Make a phone call. Tell prospective candidates that you're a voter and ask how they'll improve biking, walking and mass transit. Go to their forums, listen to their speeches, get involved, and when the time is right—in person and at the polls—remind them that New York City's a better place because of its livable streets.

Sincerely,

Paul Steely White
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Talking about Bike Share

“Citi Bike will give New Yorkers and the 50 million tourists who visit New York each year a healthy, green way to navigate the city.”

– City Council Speaker Christine Quinn



Paul Stealy White



Michael Murphy

“I am very happy to know that when your new Bike Share system is launched next month, there will be bike stations here in our neighbourhood. I would much rather see bicycles and bike-riders around here than the limousines, armoured SUVs and other gas-guzzling cars that we all use at the United Nations!”

– United Nations Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon



ITOP

“This can change the city. Not everything overnight, but it gives people a whole new way to get around. Bike share programs have been off-the-chart successful, I think, everywhere they’ve done them.”

– Mayor Michael Bloomberg



Andrew Parsons

“My advice is, ‘Enjoy it.’ I think it’s high time that New York had it. It’s a great scheme; it will go well.”

– Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

“Most of what I hear is, ‘How come there’s not a station that’s closer to me? There are parts of Brooklyn where if you stop walking for a second, someone is going to chain their bike to you.’”

– Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan



Michael Murphy



Mauricio Macri

“It will make New Yorkers rethink their city and rewrite the mental maps we use to decide what is convenient, what is possible. Parks, restaurants and friends who once seemed beyond plausible commuting distance on public transportation will seem a lot closer.”

– David Byrne,
Author, Artist, Bike Advocate



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COMMUTER PROFILE

Robyn Hillman-Harrigan and Lillian Gerson

ROBYN HILLMAN-HARRIGAN (LEFT) AND LILLIAN GERSON (RIGHT) WITH THEIR CUSTOM COOLER TRICYCLE (BOTH MEMBERS SINCE '12).

Occupation? ROBYN: We're the bosses of Shore Fruit, the Rockaway's only mobile, bicycle-powered, cut-fruit cart.

That's pretty great. Where'd the idea come from? ROBYN: We have a houseboat here in the Rockaways and were thinking about what we were going to do this summer. We thought it would be great to be able to work by the beach and be part of the community. And we knew we wanted to be on a bike, and we wanted to sell something healthy.

You sell mango, pineapple and watermelon? Why did you choose those fruits? ROBYN: Well, Lillian's obsessed with watermelon.

LILLIAN: I love watermelon. I've been very much in love with the fruit of watermelon since I was five. I won a watermelon seed-spitting contest in Luling, Texas. They had a long, painted asphalt "spitway." My seed went 31 feet, I think. I have a trophy.

ROBYN: But also watermelon, pineapple and mango all have very good colors. They look good together and they taste good together. They're beach fruits, kind of refreshing when you've been in the water.

LILLIAN: The kabobs are topped with a blueberry, for pizzazz. We use local,

organic produce as much as possible, so our watermelons are organic, our mangoes and blueberries are from Upstate or New Jersey.

ROBYN: But the pineapple's a little hard to find organic.

LILLIAN: Or local.

How important is your bike to your business? ROBYN: The bicycle has a lot to do with it. You're on the level of people when you're riding around on the boardwalk. People take pictures all the time. The tricycle and the big papier-mâché fruit kabob are a conversation starter. Kids come up and point to it. Sometimes kids are like, "I don't want fruit." And then they see the kabob and are like, "Oh, I want that!" It makes it more fun. It's not boring fruit.

Do you ever lose a customer for selling the healthy thing? LILLIAN: That happens sometimes. People just want their Coke.

ROBYN: We're OK with that. We know we could make more money if we sold Coke and French fries.

LILLIAN: But it's not only about making money. A lot of people actually come to us wanting a Coke or a Pepsi, and leave with a coconut water or one of the all-

natural drinks we sell. We sell flavored sparkling water, but we call it soda. It's actually sparkling juice. But when I yell "grape soda," I get more responses than when I yell "grape spritzer, organic juice and seltzer!"

You must meet a lot of New Yorkers in a day. Do you have any favorites?

LILLIAN: I have one. My favorite is probably this guy who's always out here flying a kite—

ROBYN: I was going to say Kite Man!

LILLIAN: One day he said to me, "Hey, watermelon lady." And I said, "Hey, Kite Man." Now, sometimes we give each other high fives.

It's already August. What happens to Shore Fruit at the summer's end?

LILLIAN: We want to start doing events. That's our next endeavor. We want to do Shore Fruit takes gay weddings. I heard the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck was at Christine Quinn's wedding. We want to do her next wedding.

ROBYN: We can say, "Buy fruits by fruits!"

SHORE FRUIT CAN BE FOUND ON THE BOARDWALK AT ROCKAWAY BEACH, FROM BEACH 86TH STREET TO BEACH 106TH STREET, WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, FROM 11AM TO 7PM, THROUGH LABOR DAY.

BIKE NEWS

Milestones



Andrew Hinderaker

A GREENLIGHT FOR THE GREENWAY

It's official! The Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway is on its way. Last month the DOT finalized the route, laid out next steps and proposed an array of funding options. The 14-mile multi-use path, which will run from Greenpoint to Sunset Park, now consists of 23 distinct capital projects that will be built as money becomes available. According to DOT's announcement, "upcoming construction of permanent protected paths on West, Flushing and Van Brunt streets," are coming in the near future.



Andrew Hinderaker



THE BIKE AMBASSADORS BRING IT AGAIN

T.A.'s team of Bike Ambassadors has been out in force so far this summer, spreading the message of responsible cycling to folks around the city. The six-person team has already led safety trainings in schools, summer camps, a YMCA and on the street. They've also met with the 94th Precinct in Greenpoint to address a spate of doorings in that neighborhood. In the next few weeks, six more Bike Ambassadors will come onboard, doubling the group's outreach capacity. What will they do with all that new person power? Start prepping people for Citi Bike by passing out station maps, signing up new T.A. members, and a lot more of the same grassroots outreach. This summer, more New Yorkers than ever before are out on their bikes, which keeps the Ambassadors busy (and psyched!).

ACT LOCAL

New York City's bike advocates are getting personal, bringing the fight for safer and more sustainable streets to their own neighborhoods. In the last few months, empowered individuals and community shareholders have—with a little help from T.A.—made giant steps towards better biking in Ditmas Park, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Clinton Hill, Bay Ridge, the Lower East Side and Chinatown. Whether it's infrastructure improvements like the sharrows and timed lights that will soon line Brooklyn's Lafayette Avenue, community-generated action plans like the Local Spokes Campaign in Manhattan's Community Board 3 or neighborhood-wide efforts to sign up more Bike Friendly Businesses in Central Brooklyn, each of these small campaigns is part of a virtuous cycle that's spinning across the city.



Andrew Hinderaker



Andrew Hinderaker

THE GREAT PARKING SPOT SWITCHEROO

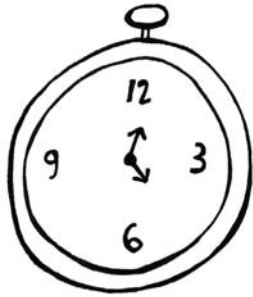
Local business owners, Transportation Alternatives volunteers and the City DOT have been working to convert car parking spots into bike parking spaces at select sites around the city. Thanks to an innovative program called "Street Racks," motor vehicle parking spaces in front of particularly popular cycling destinations are being transformed into bike parking facilities capable of storing upwards of eight two-wheelers. You can try out these new bike parking places in front of Mud Coffee in the East Village and Gorilla Coffee in Park Slope. More are coming to Kinfolk Studios in Williamsburg, the corner of Court and Pacific in Cobble Hill and, if a group of neighborhood activists and the owners of Queens Kickshaw have their way, the corner of Steinway and Broadway in Astoria too.



PEDESTRIAN CULTURE

Walk the Walk

What makes New York City streets so vibrant, so interesting and so indefinably New York? Is it the layout of the city? Is it the 24-hour subway system and the 24-hour bagel stores? Is it the people themselves? Various studies in various fields have tried to quantify that special something that makes the streets of New York feel so different from the streets of Tokyo, or Jakarta, or Paris.



A NEW YORK MINUTE

Turns out that the larger a city, the faster its inhabitants walk. And that time-worn trope about the differences between stressed-out New York and laid-back Los Angeles? Looks like science has actually backed that one up: According to psychologist Robert Levine, residents of the Northeast talked faster, walked faster and worked faster than their West Coast counterparts. It seems then that walking is not just an element of urban life, but an essential element of what it means to be a certain sort of city dweller.



YOU HOUND DOG, YOU

Everyone has heard of a “fast woman,” but few know that the phrase found its origin on New York City’s streets. According to historian Clay McShane, the term came into use to describe the women who, in the cultural opinion of 1950s New York, enjoyed speeding around newly-cleared streets a little too much. Big, bright cars with red leather seats. Men in dark suits and dark hats. Women in floral dresses and pearl earrings. Elvis Presley on the radio. Fast cars, fast women and fast-forming gender norms.



SO SAY THE EXPERTS

Opinions on jaywalking here in New York City seem to tie in pretty well with public personalities. “Jaywalking is a very dangerous thing!” said Mayor Giuliani when he was in office. “Pedestrians as well as people who drive automobiles have to respect each other.” Giuliani also supported raising fines for jaywalking, which even some police resisted. What does the current mayor have to say about the pedestrian situation? Mayor Bloomberg concentrates not on the walkers but on the speeding drivers who threaten them. “We’ll put up their names and pictures someplace,” he said. “Maybe we can shame them.” Jane Jacobs wasn’t a mayor, so perhaps she could be a little more brutal with her opinions. “Automobiles,” she wrote, “are often conveniently tagged as the villains responsible for the ills of cities and the disappointments and futilities of city planning. But the destructive effect of automobiles are much less a cause than a symptom of our incompetence at city building.” Don’t sugar-coat it for us, Jane.



NAME THAT FINE!

Take a quiz on cultural stereotypes that hold up under pressure! Match the country or city to its fine for jaywalking:

- 1) Sweden
- 2) Singapore
- 3) Salt Lake City

- A) Up to \$750, under “Operation Friendly Reminder”
- B) Cars must always yield to pedestrians!
- C) Up to three months in jail

(Answers: 1B, 2C, 3A)



JAYWALK THIS WAY

Over the course of the 20th century, the car attempted to remake American cities in its image—and it succeeded. But before the car companies could pave over parks for parking lots, they had to vilify the obstacles standing in the way of increased auto dominance: pedestrians. No longer were walkers free to navigate cities as they saw fit. Instead, they were arrested, menaced and labeled “jay-walker.” The term itself (a “jay” was an inexperienced rube, fresh in from the county) was one of the most effective tools in delegitimizing pedestrians while legitimizing cars.

JESSIE
GRAY
SINGER



Free Bike Registry

Free BikeGuard Asset Tags

*Got a minute? Protect your bike for **Free**.*



How it Works:

STEP 1

Go to transalt.org/bikeguard and confidentially register your bike for free.

STEP 2

Request a set of BikeGuard™ tags for free.

STEP 3

If your bike is ever lost and found, a scan of your BikeGuard™ tag will find you for free.



T.A. Members register for free at
<http://www.transalt.org/bikeguard>



A free community
service initiative by

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Andrew Hinderaker

STREET SCENE

On Delancey Street, History Repeats

EIGHTY-TWO YEARS AGO, DELANCEY Street's situation wasn't much different than it is today. The thoroughfare, which cuts from the Williamsburg Bridge to Bowery, was dangerously packed with every type of transportation, and the mayor decided to do something about it.

Of course, that mayor was Fiorello LaGuardia, the year was 1930, the problem was more about pushcarts than SUVs and the solution involved building the Essex Street Market so that street vendors would have a place to hawk their wares. It worked, but almost ever since, another problem took its place: automobile traffic. And that's only gotten worse. In the past six years, more than 730 people have been injured on Delancey Street. Nine have been struck and killed. Now, for the first time since 1930, another mayor is ready to take on Delancey.

The 82-year wait is not without reason. As New York City thoroughfares go, Delancey Street is as complicated as they come. The eight-lane roadway is one of Manhattan's widest crosstown boulevards. As a terminus for Williamsburg Bridge traffic, Delancey is the only cross-

town street that carries all the vehicles from a major river-crossing. Crowded in among all those cars is an unending stream of pedestrians and bicycles. Delancey Street never lost its historic role as a shopping district for the neighboring communities in Chinatown, Little Italy and the Lower East Side, and with North Brooklyn's booming population of bicyclists, it's a natural crosstown bike route.

This June, Mayor Bloomberg and the Department of Transportation broke ground on a solution as complex as Delancey Street's problem. Homing in on the Williamsburg Bridge's connection to Delancey—where bicyclist Jeffrey Axelrod and pedestrians Dashane Santana and Patricia Cuevas were killed in the last year alone—the DOT eliminated outer traffic lanes on both sides of the bridge. Before, the whopping 165-foot-wide street indicated to drivers to accelerate onto a highway, not slow onto a neighborhood street. Now, the north-side sidewalk will be extended with paint and planters, and on the south side of the bridge Delancey's service road will be pedestrianized to provide 14,160

square feet of new public space between Norfolk and Clinton streets. On Bowery, at the west terminus of Delancey Street, the DOT implemented a similar solution. Where the street widened from four lanes to eight, the DOT added new space for pedestrians and shrunk traffic lanes to make for a more gradual transition.

Because more than half of all the pedestrians struck on Delancey Street had a walk signal in their favor, the DOT paid special attention to turning vehicles. To reduce conflicts, they have restricted left turns where Delancey intersects with Allen, Chrystie and Essex streets. The City also shortened the distance vehicles travel through the Lower East Side by allowing turns onto the Williamsburg Bridge directly from Clinton Street south of Delancey.

Only time will tell if Mayor Bloomberg's efforts to improve Delancey Street will do as well as Mayor LaGuardia's, but one thing's certain: A cure for Manhattan's most historically treacherous street is a prospect for every street in NYC; if we can make it better there, we can make it better everywhere. ■



THE SIT-DOWN

Piers North Is a Mad Man

THIS SUMMER, TRANSPORTATION Alternatives is going big—billboard-size to be exact. Thanks to donations from the outdoor advertising companies Van Wagner and Edison, we’ve secured a dozen billboards in high-traffic areas throughout the city. Everyone around the office agreed that it was an amazing opportunity for something great, but no one had any great ideas. That’s when we hooked up with Piers North.

A British-born creative at the world-renowned independent advertising agency Mother, Piers is also an avid cyclist and a fan of our advocacy. He and his team worked with T.A. to develop a billboard campaign that speaks to cyclists and New Yorkers and prepares the city for the arrival of a huge bike share system. If all that wasn’t enough, he also sat down with *Reclaim* to talk about it.

How did you first hook up with Transportation Alternatives?

PIERS NORTH: I started talking with Paul [T.A.’s Executive Director] on a long,

boring training ride in the middle of last winter. We were freezing our bollocks off and going back and forth when it became clear that there was a good opportunity between us. For T.A., Mother could help spread the message, and for Mother there was an opportunity to work with a great organization on a project we’re into. So many of our employees bike to work, and we all believe in the cause. It’s a win-win-win.

So then what happened?

Once T.A. told us that they had this billboard space, we started thinking about a tone of voice. Advertising is like any relationship: you’ve got to work out your boundaries and find a voice that makes you both comfortable, but also makes both parties feel like they’re pushing boundaries. That’s what keeps things exciting. T.A. knew it wanted to be out there with a public point of view—to be the voice for cycling in New York—and we both recognized that, with bike share on the horizon, now was the time to lead an inevitable conversation.

What conversation?

It seems certain that biking is going to be a hot topic again; that bike share will be controversial in some quarters, so we wanted to start that conversation. I think we’re about to begin cycling’s third chapter: first there were the bike lanes, then there were the tickets and fear-mongering reports and now we’re at bike share. This time we’re going to set the tone.

What kind of tone?

If you look at the tag lines, they talk about playing nicely; they talk about our right to have space on the road. I’m thrilled with where we’ve ended up.

You mean “Bike Like a New Yorker.”

I mean all of the lines, but “Bike Like a New Yorker” is the umbrella. It’s a very powerful line that gets the tone of voice. New York is at the heart of it. Riding a bike is no different than walking or taking the subway. It makes the conversation unique. It’s different than in Portland or London



or Los Angeles. It gets at confidence, a positive mental attitude, toughness.

Have you worked on a bike campaign before?

Not for Mother, but I've been working with a cycling apparel company called Rapha for eight years.

Where did your love of bicycles start?

E.T. I thought the BMXs in that movie were so cool. I must have been seven years old, and I remember making up my mind that I needed a BMX. I struck a deal with my parents: I'd wash the car every week, and they'd pay me and then match every pound I made. Looking back at that as a parent, I'm certain they were being generous because I must have done an awful job.

But you got the BMX?

I did, and it changed my life. I grew up in the countryside, and at an early age it gave me enough independence to see friends that lived three or four miles away. A few years later, I was racing BMX and a few years after that it was mountain bikes. When I moved to London after university it was the same story: I started

out riding to work because it was fun but soon I was racing on the track at the Herne Hill Velodrome.

How does cycling in New York compare to cycling in London?

In London, people accept commuter bicyclists more, but it is a much more difficult place to be a road cyclist. In both, though, there's a spirit of togetherness: you're never really cycling alone.

A BICYCLE THAT YOU CAN FIX, HOMEMADE JAM, LEATHER BOOTS THAT WERE MADE IN AMERICA —THEY'RE NOT THAT DIFFERENT.

Part of your business is understanding what's cool and why, so can you offer any insight on the bicycle craze?

I think it follows major cultural trends. Tech isn't the story anymore. It's craft again, and cycling has gone the same

way. It has stopped being all about how fast you can go and started being about beauty. That has a broader appeal; so cycling has become more popular. I think Rapha was a pioneer in that. They turned cycling apparel from performance into romance; from space-age technology that can shave seconds off a sprint into epic stories. Cycling has more than one hundred years of heroic stories, all these amazing battles. I think those tales—of the Tour in the 50s, of the Alps—really resonate in the States. They're romantic.

Anything else?

There's also something attainable about a bike: we know how it works, especially a single speed, and there's something simultaneously beautiful and comforting about that—a bicycle that you can fix, homemade jam, leather boots that were made in America—they're not that different. You can make them yours, and you can understand them: these cranks, that handlebar, those pedals. It's definitely a fashion accessory in that respect too.

Do you think about any of that when you ride?

Absolutely not. ■

The Bike Sh

They're almost here.

10,000 Citi Bikes at 600 stations.

A brand new transit system.

A mobility revolution.

A simple way for millions to move around.

*But what else
breakthrough*

*Will it heal hearts? Change minds? Swing votes?
Forge communities? Make missed connections?*

are Effect

Excuse Me, Mr. Officer

Cyclists haven't had the best relationship with the NYPD lately. Somewhere between the scofflaw bikers, and the over-eager officers, and the 48,556 summonses issued to two-wheelers last year, the simple truth that bicyclists are regular New Yorkers has been lost. With bike share, it'll be found.

Though the actual number of Citi Bikes on the street at any give time will represent a small fraction of the more than 200,000 cyclists who crisscross the five boroughs each day, the visual consistency of the system will do a lot to normalize bikes in the urban landscape. Instead of "coming out of nowhere" or blending into the mess of rusty street signs and scrappy chains, bright blue Citi Bikes will pop from street scenes like yellow cabs and quickly become just as quintessentially New York.

That may not sound like the kind of thing that'll convince the NYPD that bikes belong, but further formalizing the look of bicycles will help to combat the perceived strangeness that turns cyclists into a threat for certain people.

What's more, the ease and accessibility of bike share will create new cyclists, and occasional cyclists, and only-when-I-have-to cyclists, who don't necessarily look the part or play to the tribalism that has kept New York City's bike scene a subculture for so many years. That will normalize cycling as well. It may even make for some empathy. For years, T.A. has talked about the windshield perspective among police officers and policy makers. Citi Bike is about to kick off an era of handlebar vantage.

Doctor, Doctor

New York City has some public health problems, which it's been working to remedy with laws regulating big sodas, smoking and trans fats. Whether you think those rules are the bee's knees or as bad as it gets, one thing is for certain: none of them are fun.

Enter Citi Bike. Suddenly getting around is an adventure, inside a workout, wrapped with great views and drizzled with convenience. It's a generative sort of public health project that's actualized with smiles, not enforced with regulations.

Not only do all but the shortest bike commutes meet the NYC DOH's suggestion for 30-minutes of exercise each day (which, coincidentally, is also the amount of time casual Citi Bike users will have before they're charged an overtime fee), but other bike trips—lunch-time rides, after-work cruises and weekend jaunts—are now available at a reasonable price to almost anyone who wants to ride. "The city's your gym," is already a DOH slogan, but Citi Bike makes it true.

Since Boston introduced its 600-bike system last year, users have burned an estimated 27 million calories. In New York City that number will be closer to half a billion, which is a big step towards a fitter city and the cheapest and most fun training program around.

The Polls and the Pedals

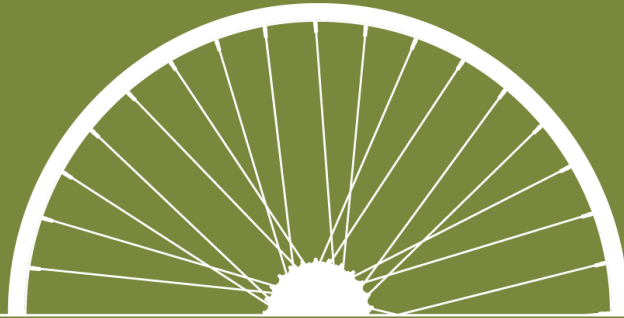
Regardless of the nickname's veracity, New York has a MetroCard Mayor. Now, it's simply a matter of time until we have a Citi Bike Council Member, or better, a real bike share devotee behind the big desk at City Hall.

If that sounds far-fetched, it's worth remembering what Citi Bike already represents: health, sustainability and frugality—all traits that elected officials want to project—and as the program proves popular and starts to change certain assumptions about cyclists, bike share will come to characterize a kind of everyman; a friendly sort who's not afraid to do what's sensible.

That's exactly what happened in London, where Mayor Boris Johnson—the driving force behind what are often called "Boris Bikes"—recently won reelection. When New York City finally finds a powerful elected official who will champion cycling and relate to its benefits and challenges, the bicycling renaissance of recent years may look like a dark age.

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For the Love of Money

It isn't exactly investment banking, but biking is a big business in New York City. From shops to bag companies to clothing brands to frame builders, millions of dollars move through the city's bicycle economy each year. Citi Bike is about to crank that up a notch.

In Washington, D.C., Capital Bike Share has fueled an explosion in bicycling enthusiasm, according to local shop owners, who also report that all the excitement has meant more sales of everything from accessories (like helmets) to fully outfitted bikes. "You are getting more and more people that loved using bike share and now are saying, 'Wait, I want something that's my own,'" a shop salesman told WNYC's *Transportation Nation*.

"One of the great things about bike share is it's sort of a gateway drug to biking. You don't have to make a several hundred dollar investment," said another.

Bring it on! New Yorkers aren't just ready to buy and sell in a booming bike economy, they're also positioned to design and promote styles and products that will spread around the world.

You Can Get There from Here

The conventional wisdom is that houses and offices are convenient to transit if the walk is less than half a mile. Bike share is about to remake that map, and along the way, rewrite some of the rules and assumptions that have underpinned real estate in New York City for decades.

Long before the Second Avenue Subway makes the East Side easy, years before the 7 Train extension opens up office space on the far West Side, for millions less than the East River Ferry needs to connect Brooklyn's waterfront with Manhattan's jobs, Citi Bike will tie transit-poor neighborhoods to subway and bus hubs. Why? Because a one-mile bike share trip (including picking up and parking the bike) takes the same amount of time as a half-mile walk. That quadruples the service area of every subway stop within Citi Bike's boundaries, making formerly distant pockets far more convenient and opening up the possibility for all sorts of new developments.

1 to NY

Like almost everything else in New York, Citi Bike won't be designed with tourists in mind—there are plenty of great bike rental companies for that business—but like the subway or the West Village or the escalators in Grand Central, the fact that it's not easy for visitors won't stop a hefty chunk of the more than 50 million folks who flock to the Big Apple each year from doing so. And that's a good thing.

Tourists spent more than \$30 billion in New York City last year, generating \$16 billion in wages and supporting more than 300,000 jobs. Citi Bike will help spread that money further from traditional haunts and increase the totals. Bikers not only build up an appetite and a thirst while seeing the sites, but also have the ability to cover more ground, peek into more store windows, and stop more and shop more.

In London, "casual users," a broad category that includes tourists, account for nearly one-third of the more than 13 million bike trips taken since the program opened in December 2010. Transport for London, which operates London's bike share, has even designed a series of "Leisure Routes"—including an architectural tour, a garden tour, an independent shops tour and a ride called "Quirky London"—aimed at getting casual users to become serious consumers. Who can't think of half a dozen similar routes that would take visiting riders, and their visiting wallets, around the gems of New York? ■



**Citi Bike is going
to change the city itself.**

POLITICS

The Political Landscape

New York City's political scene is every bit as complicated as its streets. With election season not too far off, *Reclaim* thought an abbreviated field guide might prove handy.

YOU

IN THE 2010 MIDTERM ELECTION, THE SHARE OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS THAT WENT TO THE POLLS IN NEW YORK WAS A PALTRY 32.1 PERCENT, THE LOWEST IN THE NATION. THOUGH THAT'S SAD COMMENTARY ON THE CONDITION OF OUR DEMOCRACY, IT'S GOOD NEWS IF YOU WANT YOUR VOTE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, MAJOR ELECTIONS AND CRUCIAL PRIMARY RACES—LIKE THE CONTEST TO UNSEAT CONGRESSMAN CHARLES RANGEL IN HARLEM—HAVE BEEN DECIDED BY FEWER THAN ONE THOUSAND VOTES. NOW MORE THAN EVER, YOUR VOTE CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

UNIONS

NOT LONG AGO, THE ARITHMETIC OF NEW YORK CITY ELECTIONS MADE IT ALL BUT CERTAIN THAT A CANDIDATE WHO HAD A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITY'S MOST POWERFUL LABOR UNIONS COULD EXPECT TO WIN IN NOVEMBER. THOUGH THAT'S NOT QUITE THE CASE ANYMORE, BIG UNIONS LIKE SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL AND THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AS WELL AS PARTICULARLY PROMINENT UNIONS, LIKE THE ONES THAT REPRESENT THE NYPD AND THE FDNY, CAN HELP MOVE BIG VOTING BLOCS, SHAPE NEWS STORIES AND WOO EDITORIAL BOARDS.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

PULPITS AND POLITICIANS HAVE HAD A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP IN THIS COUNTRY FOR AS LONG AS CHURCH AND STATE HAVE BEEN SEPARATE. IN NEW YORK CITY, POLITICALLY ACTIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERS LIKE THE REVEREND AL SHARPTON AND CARDINAL TIMOTHY DOLAN ARE HOUSEHOLD NAMES, BUT THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF OTHER FAITH-BASED LEADERS—LIKE AARON AND ZALMAN TEITELBAUM, FLOYD FLAKE AND A.R. BERNARD—WHO MIGHT NOT BE AS FAMILIAR BUT ARE EVERY BIT AS ABLE TO SHAPE AN ELECTION WITHOUT SKIPPING A SERVICE.

CONSULTANTS

RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN IN A MAJOR MEDIA MARKET LIKE NEW YORK CITY ISN'T SOMETHING THAT MOST HUMANS—EVEN THE MOST REPTILIAN—CAN LEARN ON THE FLY AND SQUEEZE IN AFTER A HARD DAY'S WORK. THAT'S WHY THERE ARE PROFESSIONALS; LOTS OF THEM. FROM HUGE OUTFITS WITH OFFICES AROUND THE COUNTRY TO MOM-AND-POP SHOPS THAT SPECIALIZE IN JUST ONE BOROUGH'S BUSINESS, POLITICAL CONSULTANTS CAN HANDLE EVERYTHING FROM COMMUNICATIONS TO FUNDRAISING TO POLICY—FOR A FEE, OF COURSE.



ADVOCATES

BEFORE ADVOCATES WERE “ADVO-CATES,” THEY WERE “GOO-GOOS.” BIRTHED IN NEW YORK CITY AND BROUGHT TO PROMINENCE IN THE ELECTION OF 1894, WHEN THEIR REFORM EFFORTS HELPED ELECT AN ANTI-TAMMANY CANDIDATE AS MAYOR, GOO-GOOS (A NICKNAME FOR “GOOD GOVERNMENT GUYS”) ARE STILL THE CONSCIENCE OF NEW YORK POLITICS. A FEW OF THE MOST NOTABLE GROUPS INCLUDE THE NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES AND THE DRUM MAJOR INSTITUTE.

POLITICIANS

THESE ARE THE FACES ON BILL-BOARDS AND THE NAMES ON BAL-LOTS; FAMOUS FOR WINNING ELEC-TIONS WITH POETRY AND GOVERNING IN PROSE. BECAUSE MOST ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE ULTIMATELY RESPON-SIBLE FOR SUCH A BROAD ARRAY OF POLICY ISSUES AND DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONAL CONCERNS, A LOT OF PRACTICAL POWER AND EVERYDAY KNOW-HOW RESTS WITH THEIR STAFF. WHETHER IT’S THE MAYOR’S DEPART-MENT COMMISSIONERS OR AN ADMIN-ISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AT A COUNCIL MEMBER’S OFFICE, PAY ATTENTION TO A POLITICIAN’S PEOPLE, AND YOU’LL GET A GOOD IDEA OF WHAT THEY’RE REALLY ABOUT.

POLLSTERS

POLITICS ISN’T ALWAYS ABOUT DOING WHAT’S RIGHT. IN FACT, IT’S OFTEN ABOUT DOING WHAT’S POPULAR. THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THAT BEST—AND CAN SHOW YOU THE PROOF IN A SPREADSHEET—ARE THE CITY’S POLLSTERS. OUTFITS LIKE QUINN-PIAC UNIVERSITY POLLING INSTITUTE, GLOBAL STRATEGIES GROUP AND PENN SCHOEN BERLAND NOT ONLY EVALUATE A CANDIDATE’S POSITIONS, THEY CRUNCH THE NUMBERS TO HELP SHAPE THEM AS WELL.

EDITORIAL BOARDS

DESPITE AN EXCESS OF ALMOST EVERY TYPE OF INFORMATION, ALL BUT THE MOST WELL-INFORMED NEW YORKERS HAVE NO IDEA WHO’S RUN-NING FOR WHAT OFFICE AND HOW THEY PLAN TO MAKE THINGS BETTER. THAT’S ONE OF THE REASONS WHY EDITORIAL BOARDS AT THE CITY’S THREE MAJOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS (*THE NEWS*, *THE TIMES* AND *THE POST*) AND DOZENS OF FOR- EIGN-LANGUAGE DAILIES HAVE SUCH A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY. A GLOW-ING ENDORSEMENT CAN SHAPE THE OPINION OF A FEW THOUSAND FOLKS, WHICH IS OFTEN ALL IT TAKES TO WIN A SEAT IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

TRADE GROUPS

WHETHER IT’S REAL ESTATE, CON-STRUCTION, HOSPITALITY, FINANCE, FASHION OR FILM, THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF INDUSTRIES IN NEW YORK CITY THAT EACH EMPLOY HUN-DREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE AND GENERATE HUNDREDS OF MIL-LIONS IN TAX REVENUE. EACH OF THOSE ECONOMIC ENGINES HAS A TRADE GROUP FIGHTING FOR THE IN-TERESTS OF ITS MEMBER COMPANIES. THEY WORK TO SHAPE THE POLITICAL DEBATE THROUGH CAMPAIGN CON-TRIBUTIONS, SPECIAL EVENTS, PRESS ATTENTION AND MYRIAD OTHER WAYS THAT ARE OFTEN AS HIDDEN FROM PLAIN VIEW AS THEY ARE IMPACTFUL.

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ADELINE
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PUBLIC REALM

Full Speed Ahead for Neighborhood Slow Zones



THE BRONX HELPERS WORKED WITH T.A. TO GET ONE OF THE 13 NEW NEIGHBORHOOD SLOW ZONES INSTALLED IN MT. EDEN.

FIVE YEARS AGO, NEIGHBORHOOD Slow Zones were a fringe idea in U.S. cities, popular among a few urban planners, with test cases aplenty on the other side of the Atlantic. Now, thanks to a textbook advocacy campaign by Transportation Alternatives, they're coming to 13 neighborhoods around New York.

The details of the new Neighborhood Slow Zones are simple: the speed limit will be reduced to 20 miles per hour from 30; the zones will be marked by a prominent blue gateway at all streets entering them; and speed humps, stenciled signage and other low-cost traffic calming measures will be in place to slow vehicles inside each zone. But how these groundbreaking safety improvements came about is more complex.

For more than two decades, T.A. campaigned against speeding, fighting for—and winning—slower speeds in school zones and neighborhoods with high populations of older residents. Advocates also took every opportunity to remind elected officials and reporters that a pedestrian struck by a motor vehicle traveling at 20 miles per hour is

three times more likely to survive than one struck by a vehicle traveling at 40.

At the end of 2010, however, when Mayor Bloomberg's livable streets agenda was in full swing, T.A. decided to ramp up its efforts to slow speeds by hosting a Stop Speeding Summit at the NYU Wagner School of Public Service. The summit brought together elected officials, community groups and leaders in the burgeoning field, ultimately bearing seeds that quickly grew into a Neighborhood Slow Zone pilot program in the Claremont section of the Bronx, which debuted in late 2011.

That effort proved wildly successful as well, reducing top speeds in the area by approximately ten percent and prompting dozens of other groups around the city to speak out for similar changes.

With T.A.'s help, those groups began to petition the city and enlist other groups in their efforts until more than one hundred communities applied for their own Neighborhood Slow Zone. The 13 sites selected by the DOT were drawn from that list, and at the press conference to announce the expanded

program, the Mayor of New York City and his Transportation Commissioner sounded like they could have been keynote speakers at the summit that started it all.

Mayor Bloomberg said, "We are continuing our assault on the number one traffic killer: speeding. We've seen success already where we have installed Slow Zones and we expect safety will improve as speeding is reduced in these communities."

Commissioner Sadik-Khan told reporters, "Our residential streets need to be drawn to this human scale, and by simply reducing the speed of passing cars by 10 miles per hour, we can save lives as we make the streets people walk along more inviting."

These talking points are a sure-fire indicator that the Slow Zone program will continue to expand. From zero city officials worrying about New York City's speeding epidemic to 13 official Slow Zones installed in a year flat; that's the kind of speeding that Transportation Alternatives can get behind. Full speed ahead! ■

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– Mountain Bike Magazine,
May 1998

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE UPDATES

Dispatches from the Front

Transportation Alternatives' Volunteer Committees host monthly meetings and social outings, and support vibrant online communities. They also make fighting for local street improvements a lot of fun.

EAST SIDE

The East Side Volunteer Committee has been busy on three fronts: establishing a campaign to win separated bike paths on Fifth and Sixth avenues; urging local police precincts to enforce idling laws; and lobbying CB 6 members to resist efforts to scale back bike share at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. They're all tough battles, but the East Side Volunteer Committee has a track record that inspires confidence, and they won't give up without a fight.

MEETS

WHEN: First Tuesday of every month, 6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Vanderbilt YMCA, 225 E. 47th Street, 5th Floor (Manhattan)
CONTACT: Steve Vaccaro, Chair, vaccaro500@gmail.com

STATEN ISLAND

On Staten Island, the Volunteer Committee has been signing up Bike Friendly Businesses in hopes of building support for more bike tourism in the borough. They've also been helping to organize a T.A. Transit Town Hall in August and continuing with their Grymes Hill traffic calming campaign.

MEETS

WHEN: Third Thursday of every month, 6:30 – 8 PM
WHERE: Everything Goes Book Cafe, 208 Bay Street (St. George)
CONTACT: Meredith Sladek, Chair, meredith@transalt.org

BROOKLYN

The big news in Brooklyn last month was the Fourth Annual Brooklyn Waterfront Epic Ride, organized by T.A.'s Brooklyn Volunteer Committee, the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, the Regional Plan Association, the National Parks Service and REI SoHo. The ride took more than 500 participants on a tour of the Brooklyn Greenway route, helping them imagine what it will be like once it's complete.

But the past few months weren't all fun in the sun. For years, the Committee has been advocating for a bike lane extension to 5th Avenue. Finally, the idea has gained traction, and the DOT brought the plan to the local community board, which should vote on it by the end of July.

Bay Ridge has also seen some positive momentum. Thanks to the Southern Brooklyn volunteers, CB 10's Transportation Committee has finally held a discussion about bike routes in the neighborhood, proposing half-a-dozen new lanes. In the fall, the full Board will take up the issue, and the Brooklyn Volunteer Committee will be there to represent.

MEETS

WHEN: Last Thursday of every month, 7 – 8:30 pm
WHERE: Cobble Hill Community Room, 250 Baltic Street (Cobble Hill)
CONTACT: Dave 'Paco' Abraham, Chair, dave.paco.abraham@gmail.com

THE BRONX

The Bronx Volunteer Committee is pooling the energy of active community members to advocate for a Summer Streets-style event on the Sheridan Expressway. They want to remind neighbors and elected officials that streets can serve a different purpose and also provide a day of healthy activity for kids and families!

MEETS

WHEN: Second Wednesday of every month
WHERE: Check T.A. Events Calendar at transalt.org/events for locations
CONTACT: Mel Rodriguez, bikethebronx@gmail.com

QUEENS

The Queens Volunteer Committee has spent the last few months enjoying the summer by hosting and helping with all sorts of events, including a Greenmarket Ride, a Jane Jacobs Walk in Elmhurst and a trip along the LIRR right-of-way that could become the Queensway.

They've also been advocating for a pedestrian plaza in Astoria (check out the Friends of Newtown Plaza Facebook page), continuing their traffic monitoring efforts on Greenpoint and Borden avenues and reviving their Queens Boulevard Campaign.

MEETS

WHEN: Second Monday of every month, 6:30 – 8 pm
WHERE: Greater Astoria Historical Society, 35-20 Broadway, 4th Floor (Astoria)
CONTACT: Jessame Hannus, Chair, belleoflonglake@gmail.com

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TRANSIT

Winning the Waiting Game

Andrew Hinderaker



BUS RIDERS WHO HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR SERVICE RESTORATIONS FINALLY SEE A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

T.A.'S RIDER REBELLION CAMPAIGN hasn't won the fare-hike war yet, but they've just secured a massive victory in the battle for better transit service.

As a direct result of Transportation Alternatives' organizing efforts and Transit Town Hall events, the MTA Board recently announced that it would improve bus service on 24 lines, add five new bus routes, permanently extend the G Train to the Church Avenue stop and restore service to one of the bus routes that was cut in 2010. Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road commuter-train lines will also see service increases.

"The service investments we are announcing today will give our customers more connections to where they want to go, more options on nights and weekends and more reason to stay out of their cars and take buses, subways and commuter trains instead," MTA Chairman Joseph Lhota said.

And he's right. This is a huge win for the MTA's 8.5 million daily customers, but it's only a step in the right direction. All told, the service enhancements and restorations will cost the Authority \$29 million annually, less than one-third of the \$93 million cut from the budget in

2010, and less than seven percent of the \$450 million the Authority's upcoming fare hike is estimated to raise each year.

"Now, it's time for Governor Cuomo to heed the call for a full restoration of transit service to underserved communities all over the city," T.A.'s Executive Director Paul Steely White told *Reclaim*. "The State Government must invest in fair, citywide access to reliable public transportation."

That's a sentiment T.A.'s Rider Rebellion Campaign has heard in church basements, community centers, senior living facilities and school cafeterias—from Soundview to Fordham Heights to Sheepshead Bay to Elmhurst around the city. Neighborhoods deeply impacted by the sweeping transit cuts of 2010 are still hurting, and they're still rallying to fight the proposed 2013 fare hike.

"We've been hosting Transit Town Halls around the city to engage riders and legislators about what they're going to get in return for these fare hikes," said T.A.'s Director of Transit Advocacy Ya-Ting Liu. "We want everyone to ask the important question: What are the riders getting?"

Even with these new lines and restorations the answer is "not much," and

the numbers back that up. Three years ago, a budget shortfall in Albany forced the MTA to cut two subway lines, 32 bus routes and 570 bus stops. What's been restored is a tiny fraction of what was lost.

"Sure the MTA's recent announcement is encouraging," said Liu, "But what I find really encouraging is when riders start their own campaigns to improve transit in their neighborhood."

"Getting off the bus in Crown Heights the other day," Liu went on, "I met a woman named Jacqueline Carthen with a clipboard in her hand. She was petitioning to restore B48 Bus service, because she needed that bus to get to church and the supermarket. Three weeks later, she had collected over 2,500 signatures and gotten all her City and State elected officials to send a letter to the MTA urging restoration of the B48. Guess what? The B48 is one of the buses that made it on MTA's recent list of improvements. Because she's out there, and others like her are working around the city, I know we can do more than win a battle for better service; I know we can win the war for a sustainable and affordable transit system that serves all New Yorkers." ■

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FORT GREENE'S NEW PEDESTRIAN PLAZA HAS PROVEN A POPULAR HANGOUT.

PLAZAS

Space Crusaders

WHEN THE MAYOR ANNOUNCED HIS ambitious plan to put a pedestrian plaza in every neighborhood in New York City, it seemed that even a few folks at the Department of Transportation thought the whole thing was farfetched.

The flagship projects along Broadway and in downtown Brooklyn were one thing: they had tourist traffic and lunch-time crowds and business improvement districts to manage the facilities, but in other corners of the city, on neighborhood streets far from the traditional tourist tracks, it seemed impossible—despite T.A.'s insistence that New Yorkers were clamoring for more public space—that the City could find the kind of community support it needed.

Five years on, that's clearly not the case. While other livable streets projects initiated at the same time have faced backlash and trumped-up outcry, the Bloomberg administration's efforts to hand over street space from cars to local communities has proven wildly popular. The demand for temporary plazas, summer-

time Play Streets, Weekend Walks events and year-round pedestrian spaces are outpacing the City's wildest expectations.

There are now permanent pedestrian plazas in communities as diverse as Jackson Heights, East New York, Morrisania and Richmond Terrace. In Williamsburg, Prospect Heights and Brownsville, temporary street closures have proven a boon for businesses and residents alike, and Play Streets, where a neighborhood street is temporarily closed to traffic so that kids can romp, have been so popular that the city has more than doubled the number of community-led Play Streets since the program was incorporated into PlaNYC in 2011.

Where is all this unprecedented interest coming from?

Transportation Alternatives' Pedestrian Advocacy Manager Jennifer Godzeno told *Reclaim*, "I think it has always been there, but it has taken some time for people to realize that there are now real mechanisms in place for residents to reclaim their streets as public space.

Once people know that it's possible to re-organize the streets all around them to better serve walking and play, they want it, and they work for it."

In neighborhoods around the city, that kind of work is underway. Residents of Astoria, Glendale and Corona have already brought plans for permanent pedestrian plazas to the DOT. In the Bronx, neighbors are fighting to restore car-free Sundays on Grand Concourse and win a temporary closure on the Sheridan Expressway. And in Jamaica, Queens, the YMCA has been working overtime to convince the NYPD and the Transportation Department that it needs a Play Street to accommodate all the kids who've flocked there this summer.

"Watching these programs grow all across the city is simply amazing," Godzeno said. "It counters the idea that these spaces are just for touristy areas and affluent neighborhoods, and affirms the fact that people in every community want, and are willing to stand up for, these kinds of improvements." ■

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Nancy Silverman and Karen Lehman



NANCY SILVERMAN (LEFT, MEMBER SINCE '10) AND KAREN LEHMAN (RIGHT, MEMBER SINCE '10).

How did you get involved with T.A.?

NANCY: Three years ago, I got a bicycle and was looking for opportunities to ride with other people. I did some searching and found the T.A. Queens Volunteer Committee and started going to their meetings and tabling, and then going on rides, and then became part of the Executive Committee and am now a Monthly Ride Coordinator.

KAREN: I became a bike commuter in the summer of 2010, and I kept hearing about T.A. Every time I would say I ride my bike to work people would say, "Have you heard about Transportation Alternatives?" Eventually, I went to a committee meeting. I really liked it. I felt like I had met the community I had been looking for. Over the next year, I became more and more involved. I liked spending time with the people and liked that they were making things better in my neighborhood.

You both plan the monthly rides the Queens Committee takes. Can you tell us a little more about that?

NANCY: We became Monthly Ride Coordinators in January of 2012. We held a monthly ride brainstorming session and five or six people chimed in with ideas, and then Karen and I met and planned out the year and set the calendar.

What's the craziest thing that has happened on a ride?

KAREN: My boyfriend got a flat tire! But we were prepared. And I guess that's not that crazy.

NANCY: Well, this isn't crazy either, but one of the interesting things is that it used to be the same few people would always show up, but it's been delightful for me to see the new people, who aren't as ensconced in the cycling world in New York. People who haven't been involved with the committee before, or maybe don't even know that much about T.A., but who have come. Someone at our last ride saw an event on BikeNYC.org, but wasn't familiar with T.A., so we got to share that with them also. Also, a *DNAinfo* reporter came to our last ride, which was pretty cool.

In all your riding, nothing crazy has happened?

KAREN: I can't think of any real mishaps.

NANCY: Because I'm an over-planner!

What would you tell people who aren't sure these rides are for them?

NANCY: We ride at a relaxed pace, and it's primarily a social activity.

KAREN: It's a great opportunity to try something new. The group is very supportive and the rides we plan vary from

10 to 30 miles. We all ride at different paces. I'm a slow rider so I sweep in the back!

Have you had a favorite ride so far?

NANCY: We did a Houses of Worship ride, which I was really happy with. We had a great turnout, people enjoyed themselves and the response after the ride was really positive. The Bike Friendly Business ride was also a success because we were able to sign up businesses in multiple neighborhoods that hadn't been reached prior to that.

KAREN: I have two favorites! The best ride I've been on was the Houses of Worship tour. Nancy did a great job organizing it, and we got to see spectacular things. From start to finish it was long, but it didn't feel like it and I met a lot of new people. I also really enjoyed the Greenmarket tour last year. I really enjoyed the content of the ride and got to learn about my community and how the Greenmarkets work. That's why we're doing it again, and this year we're visiting three totally different markets from last year! Plus, anything with food gets five points!

Anything to add?

KAREN: We've had a busy summer and in September, we're planning a back-to-school ride where we will tour colleges and universities in Queens, and then in October we're doing a cemetery ride... November...we haven't gotten that far! In December, when it's cold, we're thinking of doing a transit tour.

NANCY: One of the things the monthly ride has done for me is that it has given me confidence to ride further distances. It's also made me comfortable getting around Queens by bike. I've gotten to know Queens through the monthly rides, both the ones I participated in and now the ones I'm planning. That's been really great. ■

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